412 Two incidents that came directly under my notice in the summer of 1915
322 were fairly typical. A native with whom I was travelling in southwest Victoria Island discovered on the beach a long, nail-studded plank that had presumably fallen overboard from some vessel. He carried it several miles inland to our camp, and there spent half a day splitting it into poles for fish-spear handles, two of which he sold to a kinsman. A few days later another native found a second plank, which he proposed to convert into a sled-runner, and with this purpose in view trimmed it slightly with his hunting knife. After consulting his companions, however, he decided that a new sled-runner was not needed, so he turned the [237] plank over to his stepfather to fashion into tent-poles. In each case the native split the plank with a crude antler wedge driven home by a boulder.

322 The uses of wood were naturally manifold. From it were made the sled,
[302] the tent-poles, the frame of the kayak, the snow shovel, the table, food trays, and other articles too numerous to mention. Odd chips of wood sometimes served as fuel during the summer months, although the Eskimo preferred
824 heather or willow twigs. Willow twigs had a special use; sewn together in a
513 long strip they provided a mattress to protect the bedskins from the snow.

STONE

333 Stone (apart from native copper) played an astonishingly small rôle in the economy of the Copper Eskimo. Their winter home was invariably the snow-
[342] hut, although their predecessors in the region had dwelt in huts of snow or wood, whose ruins could still be traced in numerous places along the coast. Loose stone boulders held down the edges of the Copper Eskimo tents; pillars of stone (in many cases flat slabs of dolomite easily piled one on top of another) supported kayaks, sleds, and other goods that were temporarily abandoned during the summer months; and heaped-up boulders protected caches of meat or clothes from the ravages of foxes, wolves, and birds; but any real construc-
324 tion in stone was conspicuously lacking. There were no stone knives or adzes,
412 no arrow heads tipped with stone, no stone sinkers for fishing lines or nets, and no stone scrapers for use on wood or hides, although implements of all these types had been used by the earlier inhabitants and were sometimes gathered as curiosities by the Copper Eskimo themselves. There were stone hammers and whetstones, it is true, but these were merely unshaped pebbles picked up when
[415] the need arose and afterwards discarded. In short, stone provided the material
[354] for two objects only, the lamp and the cooking pot; and the stone cooking pot
[177] was discarded soon after our visit in favour of iron vessels brought in from the outside.

135

Figure 1. Lump of native copper. IV.D.1441. 1/1.

324 These two vessels, the lamp and the cooking pot, were invariably made from
415 soapstone (talc chlorite schist), originally with copper-bladed adzes, but in our
354 time with adzes of iron. Freshly quarried soapstone readily scratches with the
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[135]

28: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1946
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anoe. In boots, however, this V-shaped piece was never narrow, as in many shoes, but covered most of the upper surface of the foot. The leg was sewn on last; besides the seam where it joined the foot, it bore a vertical seam up the front. The loops for the cord were an integral part of every waterboot, being carefully stitched in when the sole was sewn to its V-shaped upper. Grass insoles, such as were worn in waterboots by more western natives, were not current among the Copper Eskimo, whose short socks of seal and caribou fur fulfilled the same purpose.

[824]

One saw occasionally a hybrid type of boot, which had the sealskin foot of a waterboot but a leg of caribou fur, usually, if not always, taken from an outer stocking that had worn out in the sole. Boots of this type, like the boots with legs of haired sealskin, functioned only in the early spring and late autumn; from the beginning of June until October waterboots prevailed at all times, except that the low sealskin shoes served as slippers around camp.

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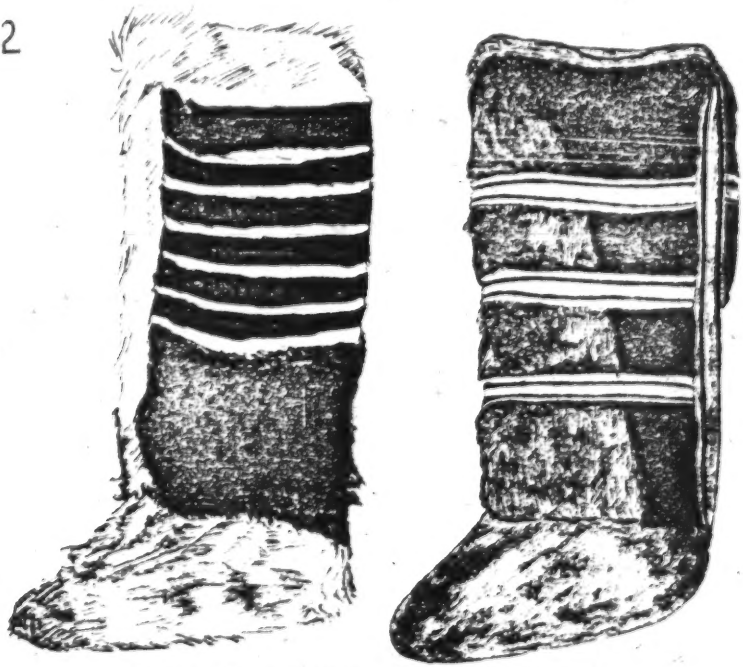

Figure 13. Man's outer stockings. IV.D.773, 784. Approx. 1/3.

296 Boot soles, like the soles of shoes, were naturally reinforced with patches that demanded repair or replacement every 2 or 3 days when travelling over stony ground. As soon as the hunter returned to camp each evening his wife turned his boots inside out to dry, and, if necessary, soaked in a pot of urine enough sealskin to patch them in the early morning. Hide from the bearded seal lasted three or four times as long as hide from the foetid seal, but the Eskimo seldom possessed enough of the material.

CHAPTER III

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE

FIRE-MAKING

372 The Copper Eskimo were familiar with the method of making fire by means of the thong drill, but rarely practised it because it involved strenuous labour and suitable wood was rare. The handles of some of their whittling knives and other tools had small holes to fit the top of the spindle, for a man pressing down with both hands could exert greater force than was obtainable with the usual drill mouthpiece. Figure 46 shows the hearth of an old fire-making apparatus; the specimen was discovered on the beach at Kater Point, close to Bathurst Inlet.

372 316 The ordinary method of making fire was by striking together two pieces of iron pyrites, for which there were several sources around Coronation Gulf, the two best known being Kugaluk River, which flows down from the Colville Hills in southwest Victoria Island into the sea behind Cape Kendall, and a small river a few miles east of Coppermine River. The pyrites was occasionally covered with sealskin or caribou skin to protect the hand.

372 237 415 824 The spark was caught in willow catkins contained in a small disk-shaped bag of sealskin closed with a circular lid of the same material (Figure 47). A little blowing soon spread the glow over a large surface so that it could ignite a lamp-stick or a bunch of matted moss roots dipped in blubber. To foment a flame, however, most Eskimo kept a little stock of dry grass, which, like the lamp-wick of eriophorum seed, they carried in small bags made from the lining around the heart of some animal (Figure 48), from the skin on a loon's foot (Figure 49), or from caribou or marmot fur.

Figure 46. Wooden hearth of fire drill. IV.D.219. 2/3.

LAMPS

354 Many writers have stressed the fundamental importance of the Eskimo blubber lamp, without which the natives could not have survived along the northern coast-line. Although in certain regions they have now adopted substitutes such as stearin candles, coal-oil lamps, wood stoves, and primus stoves, throughout large parts of the Arctic the blubber lamp still holds its own.

Porsild[1] states that "In Arctic regions proper, train-oil is the only fuel, and there the lamps are large; where other fuel —heather, wood, peat or coal—is available, either the whole year round or only in the summer, the lamp used for burning blubber oil loses its importance as a heater, and is used

[1] Porsild, Morten P.: The Material Culture of the Eskimo in West Greenland; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. LI, p. 318.

354 [511] [171] solely for illuminating purposes. For this, small specimens may suffice. But a surplus of light and heat is inevitably connected with the Eskimo idea of luxury; therefore big lamps are also found in such regions. Conversely, small and rudely made lamps for burning blubber oil are found also in the regions of the Far North.

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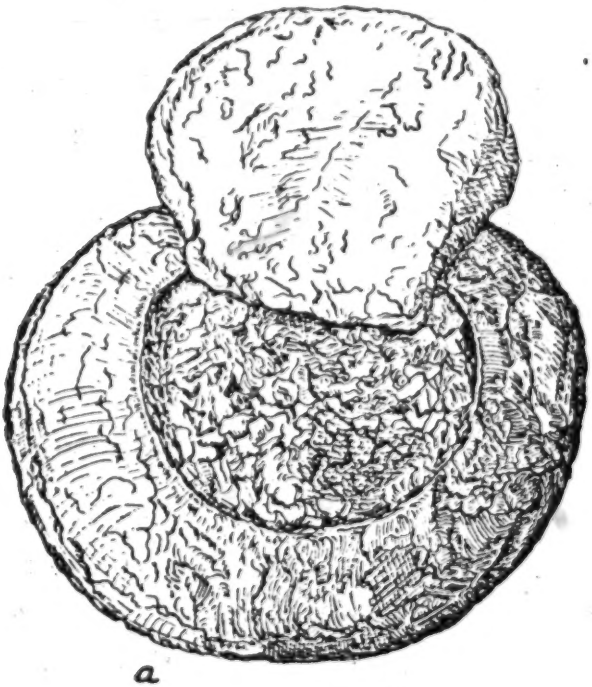

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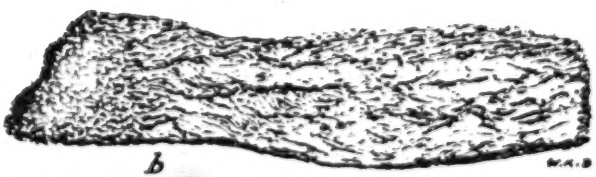

b

Figure 47. Fire-lighting apparatus; a: sealskin tinder-bag containing eriophorum seeds, IV.D.725, 1/1; b: moss-root torch, IV.D.327, 1/2.

354 171 The reason for this may either be lack of material, or these lamps may be intended for some particular purpose—for use on journeys or for illuminating the entrance or corners inside the house."

Hough again, in his well-known memoir,[1] distinguishes three kinds of Eskimo lamps on the basis of their use, viz. the house lamp, the travelling or summer lamp, and the mortuary lamp, the latter frequently being models.

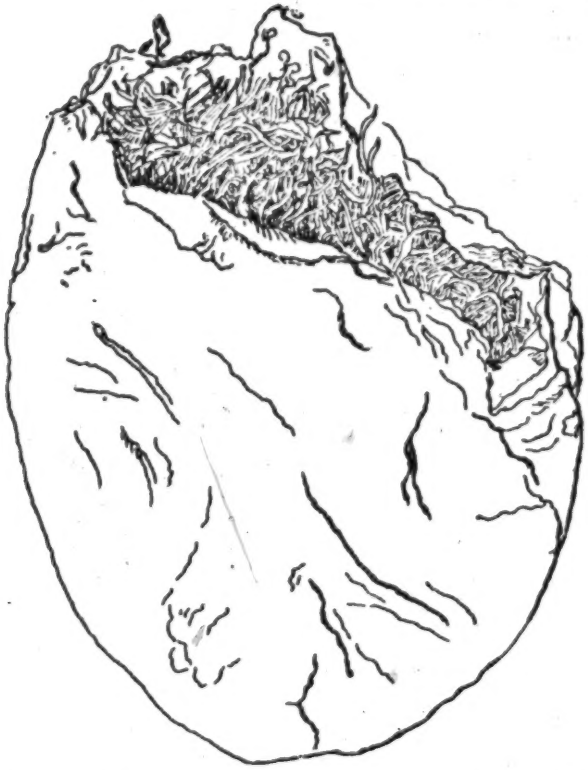

Figure 48. Bag for dry grass, made from the lining around an animal's heart. IV.D.335. 1/1.

Neither of these statements is quite correct when applied to the Copper Eskimo. They had lamps of every size, from 2 or 3 inches long up to 50 inches; and small vessels 8 or 12 inches long were as common as lamps of 30 inches. From June to September or October, when most of the snow had melted from the land and the families were scattered in search of fish and caribou, the natives generally cached their lamps with the sleds on the seashore or on the margins of lakes, and used for fuel dwarf willow, heather, *Dryas integrifolia*, and other plants, instead of blubber. Consequently, they had no special summer lamp. But because their ordinary lamp seldom functioned during the summer months we cannot say with Porsild that it had lost its importance as a heater. It still remained the indispensable prerequisite of existence during two-thirds of the year for heat as well as for light.

[1] Hough, Walter: Ann. Rept. Smith. Inst., U.S. Nat. Mus., 1896, p. 1002.

Lamps only 2 or 3 inches long were children's toys, often made by themselves while their parents were manufacturing larger vessels. The Copper Eskimo placed on the graves of females these minature lamps, or else genuine vessels of small size, simply because they valued their larger lamps too highly to throw them away, and believed that the dead person could enlarge a miniature to suit its needs. Frequently, perhaps generally, they recovered useful lamps that had been deposited on the graves of relatives a few years earlier. Very rarely did they make a lamp, even a miniature one, for mortuary purposes only; and when they did, it was nearly always a wooden model, because soapstone was procurable only in one or two districts.

Figure 49. Bag for grass or eriophorum seeds, made from loon's foot. IV.D.324. 1/1.

Most of the cooking was done on lamps not less than 24 inches long. Lamps smaller than this, even down to 5 and 6 inches, served for short journeys, but were not intended primarily for that purpose any more than to be deposited on graves. Rather they were used to dry extra clothes, to give additional light for sewing or working, or to enable a little girl to play at housekeeping in a corner of the hut. Two small lamps laid side by side sometimes took the place of one large lamp for cooking. When these smaller specimens were made of soapstone the shapes were the same, and the workmanship as careful, as in the larger ones. Frequently, however, a family was content to use a water-worn pebble with a saucer-shaped depression, or a naturally hollow slab of limestone or dolomite.

If we exclude the makeshift lamps last mentioned there was really only one kind among the Copper Eskimo, the regular house lamp, of which the smaller specimens, when not mere toys, were generally used for light alone, the larger for both light and heat. Nearly all were made of talc chlorite schist, a soapstone that is soft, of even texture, easily worked with stone or copper tools, and not liable to crack and break under the low heat of the burning blubber.[1]

[1] In their spring tents the Eskimo sometimes rested the lamp directly on two snow blocks and kept them lighted for a considerable time without other effect than the gradual melting of the snow.

354 two or three stones supported the lamp; and on short winter journeys, when the
352 lamp served only for light, it was simply placed on a block of snow. As already stated, it was seldom employed during the summer months.

354 Unlike nearly all Eskimo tribes the Copper Eskimo seldom or never used
824 moss for the lamp-wick, but substituted the seeds of the cottongrass, *Eriophorum*
[137] *angustifolium*, or, more rarely, the catkins of the dwarf willow, either of which
[230] gave a more smokeless flame. *Eriophorum angustifolium* matures about the
[415] beginning of September, and it was at that season the women gathered the seeds into small bags made of loon skin, marmot skin, or other convenient material. They gathered a large supply, as in midwinter the wick needed daily renewing; and they deferred the separation of the seeds from the stalks until leisure moments in camp.

354 *Lighting and Tending the Lamp.* The Copper Eskimo lighted and tended
372 their lamps in the same way as the Eskimo of Smith Sound[1] except that they
237 did not chew the blubber and spit it into the lamp. The housewife took out
462 of a sealskin poke two or three strips of blubber a foot or more long by
[171] several inches wide, and with a specially designed hammer of musk-ox horn (*See* Figure 63) pounded them on the table to break up the cells.[2] She then laid them in the well of the lamp, when a little oil began at once to accumulate on the bottom, unless the weather was extremely cold. In this oil she soaked
[824] her eriophorum seeds, and arranged them along the lip of the lamp in a continuous line so that their lower edges touched the bottom of the well (or at least dipped into the oil that shortly accumulated), and the upper edges projected about a quarter of an inch above the rim. To light the wick she pinched it up into little points 2 or 3 inches apart, which readily caught fire from the torch; and by patting up adjacent parts of the wick with her lamp-trimmer she quickly produced a continuous smokeless flame rising to a height of about three-quarters of an inch. As the heat melted the oil out of the strips of blubber, she removed them to the back shelf of the lamp until they drained; then, later, she threw them to the dogs. Sometimes, if the lamp already contained a certain quantity of oil, she placed fresh strips of pounded blubber on the same shelf instead of in the well, so that the oil would not accumulate too rapidly and drip over the outer edges of the lamp. The Copper Eskimo had no device for melting the blubber on a stick or shelf, such as was common in both the eastern and western Arctic.

354 Hough[3] says that lamp-trimming "only reached perfection in the old women
462 of the tribe, who can prepare a lamp so that it will give a good, steady flame for several hours, while usually half an hour is the best that can be expected." This is not true of the Copper Eskimo. There, the women naturally have more experience than the men, and on the average are more skilful, but many a hunter can tend the wick just as successfully as his wife. A lamp is seldom allowed to smoke; one of the inmates, be it the man, his wife, or even one of the children, is sure to notice it and pat down the wick.

354 The same writer states in another passage[4] that "the lamp and the pot
415 usually agree as to size, the rule being that the length of the pot shall be equal to the length of the wick edge." Among the Copper Eskimo, as in Smith Sound
[171] and, I believe, elsewhere, the sizes of the two vessels bear no direct relation to one another. For obvious reasons the wick edge of the lamp should be no shorter than the bottom of the pot; but it may be, and often is, much longer, for with her lamp-trimmer the housewife can readily adjust the flame to whatever length she desires.

[113]

[1] Cf. Sverdrup, H. P.: Contributions to the Ethnology and Anthropology of the Polar Eskimos: Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. XXXIV, p. 329 f.
[2] Polar bear fat was occasionally used instead of seal blubber, and probably fat of any kind in emergencies.
[3] Hough: op. cit., p. 1034.
[4] Hough: op. cit., p. 1037.

The lamp-trimmer mentioned several times above was in most cases merely a pencil of wood varying in length from 6 to 18 inches, generally flattened at one end and smoothed. Any small stick, whether of wood, bone, or antler, sufficed in an emergency; I have even seen a man use his knife. The stone (soapstone or asbestos) pencils, often employed in West Greenland and in Hudson Bay,[1] seem to have been unknown to the Copper Eskimo. Unknown, too, were the drip-stands of Alaska, Greenland, and other places. The Coronation Gulf soapstone is not porous as the Greenland soapstone is said to be[2]; and though oil might frequently drip over the edges, it never seeped through the vessel itself.

Every household employed torches for lighting extra lamps, for searching the corners of the hut, and particularly for conveying fire from one snow-hut to another. Occasionally a woman used the lamp-stick or even raw lamp-wick, but she always kept for the purpose four or five bunches of matted moss roots that she had collected and dried in the late summer (Figure 47*b*). Such a torch, dipped in the melted blubber, would burn several minutes, though if carried outside in windy weather it had to be shielded inside a bag or bucket. It was a common sight after a day's march to see the women carrying torches from one hut to another in order to relight their lamps; the first lamp, of course, was lighted with pyrites.

In summer, when the lamp was discarded, the Eskimo carefully extinguished their open-air fires with flat stones in order to reduce the burning wood to charcoal, which readily took a spark on some future occasion and could be kindled into a flame with the breath. In blowing the fire they did not purse their lips as we do, but curled the tongue along the lower palate into a half-cylinder that directed the breath along a narrow path. When carrying glowing coals from one tent or cooking place to another the women usually wrapped them in bunches of dry heather or *Dryas integrifolia;* where no coals were available they used the heather or dryas alone.

POTS

The Back River Eskimo commonly made their cooking pot from five flat slabs of limestone cemented together.[3] Among the Copper Eskimo we saw none of this type, only pots carved from solid slabs of soapstone. Theoretically these pots should have received two forms, one adapted for cooking over the blubber lamp in winter and the other for use over an open fire during the summer months. The pot for use with the blubber lamp should have been a long, oblong vessel, rather narrow, because the flame of the lamp was a long, narrow line; it should have been comparatively deep to hold large pieces of seal and caribou meat; and it might have had considerable dimensions and weight, as it was always carried on the sled during the winter and spring months. The pot for use over an open fire in summer should have been less narrow, and altogether smaller and lighter, because at that season all the household furniture had to be carried on the back.

In actual fact both types existed among the Copper Eskimo, but the longer, narrower form adapted for use over the blubber lamp was far more generally used, as winter conditions prevailed during 8 months of the year. The pot was nearly always rectangular in outline, though one saw occasional specimens of trapezoid form. The corners were sharp, almost at right angles, the sides slightly convex in outline and sloping inward towards the bottom, making the vessel widest and longest at the top; the convexity in the sides was occasionally marked. In large pots there was a tendency for the depth to vary inversely with the breadth, so that the narrower vessels were likewise the deepest.

[1] Porsild, M.: Op. cit., p. 221. Thalbitzer, W.: The Ammassalik Eskimo; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. XXXIX, p. 535 (Copenhagen, 1914).
[2] Birket-Smith, K.: Ethnography of Egedesminde District; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. LXVI, p. 184 (Copenhagen, 1924).
[3] Chief Factor James Anderson's Back River Journal of 1838; Can. Field-Nat., vol. LV, 2, 1941, p. 28.

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

usual starting-point for Eskimos travelling to the Great Sound, since the hills immediately north were lower than at any other place either to east or west. Okowyarvik means "the Home of the Dryad," not the wood-nymph of that name, who could never find a home in this desolate land, but the *Dryas integrifolia*, a tiny flowering plant distantly related to our rose. The Eskimos generally paid little attention to the plants around them because they added nothing to their food supply; but the dryad, heather, and willow furnished their fuel during the summer months, and in the hills heather and willow were not procurable.

We lingered a week at "Dryad Harbour," for the season was still early and the snow that covered the land would last another month. While the men were hunting caribou the women overhauled their bags of clothing, putting aside all the heavier garments not needed again till winter. To these they added the furniture of the snow-huts, the long wooden tables, the drying frames, and a few of the stone lamps. Each family made a separate pile of its possessions, and on top of each pile the men deposited their sealing weapons, useless for the life on land. I myself cached nearly all my provisions—pemmican, rice, oatmeal, hard bread, and tea sufficient to last me about a month; only a little tea and cornmeal I retained on my sled, to ease the transition from the "balanced" diet of